

# Pheasant Hunting Prospects, 2010

## *Agriculture and Grassland Program Management Note 10-1*

### 2009-2010 Hunting Season

Our harvest estimates are based upon results from the 2009-10 Illinois Hunter Harvest Survey. Standing corn throughout much of the pheasant range may have made it harder to hunt and diminished hunter interest. An estimated 22,244 hunters (down 23.3%) harvested 64,262 pheasants (down 37.9%). Daily harvest per hunter was also down (12.3%).

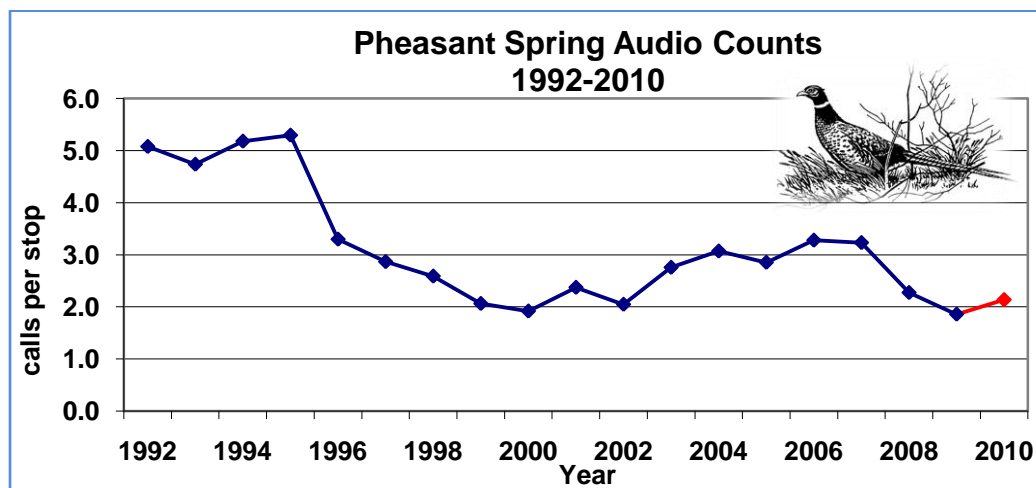
Table 1. Pheasant hunter participation and success 2003- 2010.

Season	Harvest	Hunters	Average Pheasants/Trip	Average Pheasants/Season	Average Days/Season	Total Days Hunting
2003-04	181,976	50,592	0.66	3.6	5.42	274,287
2004-05	200,059	55,075	0.67	3.63	5.44	299,696
2005-06	146,961	44,430	0.67	3.31	4.93	218,888
2006-07	118,763	38,509	0.72	3.08	4.26	164,067
2007-08	102,822	35,961	0.58	2.86	4.95	177,887
2008-09	103,399	29,016	0.73	3.56	4.86	140,911
2009-10	64,262	22,244	0.64	2.89	4.48	99,747
Percent change from 2008-09	-37.9%	-23.3%	-12.3%	-33.0%	-7.8%	-29.2%

### Pheasant Population Indices

The IDNR Wildlife staff began using a new survey technique this year to better estimate bird density and response to habitat changes. Consequently, the data is difficult to compare with previous surveys. Fortunately, we are able to make some inferences from the results of the annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). BBS data was used to estimate survey trends this year. Statewide, BBS observers heard 2.4 (35%) fewer pheasants per stop than they did last year. BBS observers in Central Illinois heard 0.9 (10.7%) more birds this year. The difference between the 2009 and 2010 surveys was not statistically significant.

Figure 1. Spring pheasant audio counts 1992 - 2010.



## **Weather**

Illinois' winter was the 19<sup>th</sup> coldest on record. The average temperature in the pheasant range was slightly warmer (0.4 degrees) than last year. Although snows were 10 inches above normal statewide, we received about 2 inches less snow this winter than last.

May and June were wet. June was Illinois' second wettest on record. The pheasant range received an average of 13.6 inches of rain (29.5% more than 2009) in May and June.

## **2010 Season Outlook**

It appears that pheasant numbers will be about the same or below last year's. Nest production was likely down in the areas that received heavy rains in May and June.

Hunters that have access to good habitat could still enjoy a successful season. Corn harvest appears to be ahead of schedule this year. If that trend continues, hunters may actually do better this year because they will have an easier time finding pheasants.

## **Best Areas**

Look for farms with unharvested grassland in fields, field borders, ditch banks, terraces or filter strips. The most productive areas for pheasant hunting continue to be in east central and northern Illinois. Based on the annual average harvest from 1997 through 2002, some of the top counties are: Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean, Carroll and Whiteside.

## **Season Dates**

November 6, 2010 – January 8, 2011 (North)

November 6, 2010 – January 15, 2011 (South)

## **Hours**

Sunrise to Sunset

## **Bag Limits**

2 per day with 6 in possession after third day



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